

Division of Public Health and Department of Correction Continue TB Response

DOVER – Following the May 9, 2017, announcement that one James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC) inmate was diagnosed with active tuberculosis or TB disease, the Division of Public Health (DPH) and Department of Correction (DOC) have been working closely together in response. DPH will offer free screenings and treatment to former inmates, former employees and visitors to James T. Vaughn who are determined to have been exposed to TB.

While the risk of transmission is low, the medical guidance is that those who have been exposed, and who get infected with the TB bacteria, should be treated so they do not develop TB disease. Consistent with routine Division of Public Health TB elimination protocols, the agency will reach out via letter and phone call to schedule testing of former inmates, former employees and visitors who are considered at potential risk. DOC also has begun screening its JTVCC employees and current inmates who may have been exposed.

TB is generally on the decline throughout the country – with 9,557 cases nationwide in 2015 – but vigilance is important. Delaware had 22 cases of TB disease (also known as “active TB”) in 2015, and 16 in 2016, and 10 to date in 2017. As opposed to the latent kind, TB disease cases are defined as having the symptoms of the illness and potentially being able to spread it to others.

TB is a bacteria that can be inhaled into the lungs of others when a nearby person with the active disease coughs, sneezes, sings or laughs. People with TB disease are most likely to spread the disease to people they spend time with every day,

such as family or other household members, close friends, and coworkers. Signs and symptoms of TB may include a progressively worsening cough that lasts more than two weeks, fatigue, weakness, weight loss, night sweats, fever, chills, and chest pain. TB can affect any bodily organ, but is infectious to others only when it occurs in the lungs or larynx (voice box).

Most people who are infected with the TB bacteria will have a positive TB test, but will never develop symptoms and cannot spread the disease to other individuals. Only people with TB symptoms can spread the disease. TB is not spread by shaking hands, touching, sharing food or drink, utensils, bed linens or toilet seats, sharing toothbrushes, or saliva from kissing.

TB disease is treatable and curable, usually by taking several medications for 6 to 9 months. About 5 percent to 10 percent of persons infected with TB bacteria will develop the disease at some time in their lives; most within the first two years after the infection occurs.

In most people who breathe in TB bacteria and become infected, the body is able to fight the bacteria to stop them from growing. The bacteria become inactive, but they remain alive in the body and can become active later. This is called latent TB infection. People with latent TB infection cannot spread TB bacteria to others. People who have latent TB infection can be treated to prevent TB disease from developing.

For medical questions about TB, call the following Public Health clinic in the county where you live:

- New Castle County: 302-283-7588
- Kent County: 302-857-5130
- Sussex County: 302-515-3200

For additional information on tuberculosis, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/tb/default.htm>.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.